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RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT

1962 Speech.

Farmers Home Administration, Program Meeting

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Outline of Speech by J. V. Highfill, Assistant Administrator, Farmers Home Administration at the 1962 Program Meetings



## RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT

In speaking of Rural Areas Development, we are talking about a program that is, in a sense, in its infancy even though the development of rural areas has been going on in this country from the time of the first settlement. The current Rural Areas Development program of the USDA is designed to further raise the incomes of people of all rural America. It is a program to effectively coordinate the activities and programs of all agencies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in cooperation with other agencies of Federal, State and local governments, other public and private organizations and individuals to provide needed assistance to citizens of communities, counties and States throughout this country. It is designed to promote needed economic and social adjustments essential for continuing our national prosperity. With the coordinated and cooperative approach to the resolution of economic and social problems, the Rural Areas Development program will come into its own as years go on. With our population increase which is estimated to be more than doubled in the relatively near future such an approach is very appropriate.

### OBJECTIVE:

The objectives of the economic policies of this Administration are aimed at strengthening a rate of economic growth that will provide full employment and adequate levels of living for all Americans. We in the Department of Agriculture, together with other Government agencies, are committed to promoting the fullest possible utilization of natural and human resources in rural areas.

In other words, WE ARE TRYING TO HELP RURAL PEOPLE IMPROVE FARM INCOME AND ASSIST RURAL LEADERS IN DEVELOPING ADEQUATE JOBS AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE AREA. This, in essence, is what Rural Areas Development is all about.

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Speech given by J. V. Highfill, Assistant Administrator, Farmers Home Administration, Washington, D. C., at the 1962 Program Meetings.



In order to achieve this objective, our efforts in the renewal of the economic strength of rural America is the main concern of all of us in the Farmers Home Administration and in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The principal drive on the renewal of economic strength of rural America is centered on four broad fronts:

1. Conserving the nation's soil, water, and forest resources.
2. Strengthening the family farm - in particular, through the techniques and application of supervised credit.
3. Balancing farm production with market demands.
4. Providing the climate in rural areas that will open them up to more rapid development as centers of small industries, recreation and services.

Our major efforts must be directed along these lines and on these four broad fronts.

#### WHAT HAVE WE DONE THUS FAR?

At our policy meetings a year ago, you heard of Secretary Freeman's concept of the operation of a Rural Areas Development Technical Action Panel. At about the time of those meetings the Farmers Home Administration was delegated many responsibilities in connection with assisting local people in carrying on economic development activities. We are sure that many of you wondered then how you would do this job and carry on the loan activities of the Farmers Home Administration.

Perhaps some of you recall your previous experiences in the coordination of Agriculture's programs (such as "War Board") and thought that this would be another futile attempt in that direction. Furthermore, we suspect that some of you were reluctant to assume the responsibility as chairman of the State



RAD Technical Action Panel - and to direct your County Supervisors to be chairmen of county and area RAD Technical Action Panels.

In spite of our fears - in spite of our increased volume of loan activities - in spite of our reluctance to lead in programs to promote total economic development - great progress has been made. Rural Areas Development is emerging as a real driving force in getting economic planning and development done in communities and counties throughout our Nation.

NOW LET US LOOK AT THE RECORD. On pages 8 and 9 of your booklet you will find a summary - a summary of reports that were submitted by you. This is your report. You know better than we whether or not this report reflects the activities in your State.

The report shows that as of June 31, 1962:

1. We had formed 1367 county Technical Action Panels and 81 area Panels. These Panels serve nearly 2000 counties or about two-thirds of the agricultural counties in the United States. Since then many more county Technical Action Panels have been designated.
2. FHA Technical Action Panel members have attended over 2000 RAD Committee meetings.
3. Technical Action Panels have reviewed and recommended 286 OEDP's.
4. State Technical Action Panels have met 242 times.
5. State Panels have reviewed 174 OEDP's.
6. County Technical Action Panels have assisted with the review or development of 623 projects which are estimated to have provided job opportunities either directly or indirectly for 18,236 persons.

As in other operations, the reports vary. You will note that several States have a very few Technical Action Panels organized and have done very



little to assist the local committees in developing overall economic development programs. In spite of this, the record is good. It could be better. We believe that it will be better in the year ahead.

#### WHAT IS RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT? (A Review)

1. Rural Areas Development is in the best traditions of America.
2. It aids - It supplements - and it supports the efforts of people working to help themselves.
3. Someone has said communities are enduring, individuals are short-lived.
4. Let us think of the Rural Areas Development program as a community-wide program, county-wide or area-wide - aiding people to help themselves.

For example: Our soil and water association loans, and loans for watersheds more clearly exemplify the Rural Areas Development concept than any other types of loans we make. These loans involve local participation - local organization - and much community effort. Rural Areas Development is similar in effort - organization - and follow-through.

#### A REVIEW OF THE TECHNICAL ACTION PANEL'S RESPONSIBILITIES: (Four Major Areas.)

1. Assisting RAD Committees - local development groups - and organizations in developing OEDP's for their areas and for putting them together, securing the participation and endorsement of other agencies, and assisting the RAD Committee in routing them to the proper place.
2. Assuring that the RAD Committees are making maximum utilization of the local leadership and that the local citizenry will participate.



3. Providing technical know-how to assist the local committee to solve overall economic development problems in the area.

It is not the responsibility of the Panel to find a solution for all overall economic problems. Some economic problems cannot be solved. What the Panel can do, however, is to bring to bear the training, the experience, the analytical ability and the planning skills of its members in helping promote economic development. Panel members can and should analyze data on the area and suggest alternate courses of action and obtain outside technical assistance from other agencies. Furthermore, the Panel should work closely with the RAD Committee and provide the proper resource person to the Committee to solve the given problem. Some Panels have said we are not trained to provide assistance in such things as industrial parks or the feasibility of a processing plant. We should not attempt to furnish the answers to all technical questions but should assist the Committee in locating competent assistance from another Federal or State agency or suggest to the Committee where such assistance may be secured.

4. The Technical Action Panel should meet at least monthly and discuss and agree upon courses of action that would promote economic development. They should make such findings available to the Committee in order that the Committee may choose those programs, projects or practices that they are willing to support. When such selections have been made by the Committee, resource people should be assigned by the Technical Action Panel to assist in the development of these programs, projects and practices.



### IMPORTANCE OF OEDP'S:

An OEDP serves as the long-time farm and home plan for the county or area. It should be the basis of all action of a coordinated nature. The OEDP is the heart or core of RAD.

1. OEDP's are required by virtue of the Area Redevelopment Act in ARA counties. Why not get all rural counties to do economic planning - to develop OEDP's? We feel that we cannot provide the most effective assistance until an OEDP is developed.
2. We encourage economic planning (the development of OEDP's) in all counties or areas including those designated for ARA assistance. The OEDP is the basis of such planning. Every county should have one as the basic guide to economic development.
3. Sounder programs will be developed if a well thought-out OEDP is prepared to guide us in our actions.
4. Careful studies and advance planning will assure more accurate knowledge of economic potentials of an area. An OEDP will aid the Committee in establishing priority of projects.
5. The OEDP is the backbone of the RAD program. Lets make it just that.

### ACTIONS OF THE TECHNICAL ACTION PANELS:

1. FHA is responsible for reviewing and certifying OEDP's. The resources of our agency, as well as the resources of the USDA, have been committed to support local initiative, leadership, and coordinating action in eliminating low income and under-employment in rural areas.



2. The important objectives of Technical Action Panels should be:
  - a. To assure the best possible use of all Department programs.
  - b. To stimulate and expedite all stages of rural areas development and to assure that agencies of the Department consider requests for assistance as a departmental unit rather than as an independent unit.
3. Who should take the initiative or assume leadership in activating projects within OEDP's is a question we hear often.
  - a. The agency or agencies represented on the Panel should take the lead in activating projects taken from OEDP's once they have been agreed upon by the RAD Committee. Let us not forget that the chairman of the TAP is an FHA employee. Oftentimes members of the Technical Action Panel working with the RAD Committee can stimulate activity to the point that an agreed upon project can be activated and followed to conclusion.

For example: Let us look at it this way. If a local county RAD Committee, with the help of the Technical Action Panel, decides on a watershed project for a county as the most worthwhile, the most easily adaptable project that can be undertaken and completed in the shortest period of time, and would be of the greatest aid to agriculture and the economy of the county or area, then it seems logical that SCS, and FHA if a loan is involved, should assume the leadership in developing this segment or project of this OEDP.



Other examples: Subdivision to establish families in farming. A domestic water system.

IMPORTANCE OF CARRYING THE PEOPLE ALONG WITH THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

1. If this is to be a locally orientated - locally sponsored - and a locally conceived program - the people must know what is going on if it is to succeed.
2. Much of our difficulty at the present time stems from the fact that in too many cases the local people are not aware of what has gone into OEDP's. They are being developed by a designated group or organization that is not fully representative of or responsive to the interests and needs of all the people. They must know about the problems and opportunities and participate in their overall economic development program if we are to be most effective.
3. We need the help of local people to identify the projects that should have first priority. Priority should be given to programs or projects that are adaptable and attainable, and will provide the greatest good for the entire economy of the community or area.

FHA BULLETIN NO. 1101:

1. You recently received FHA Bulletin No. 1101 which substantially broadens the responsibility you have as chairman of the RAD Technical Action Panel. It provides for the enlargement of Technical Action Panels to include resource people that have competency in the problems of economic development. This will include - but not be limited to - vo-ag teachers, State Foresters, County Agents, Experiment Station workers, Public Health Service State employees, especially in the field of health, conservation, resource development and welfare.



2. Bulletin No. 1101 also provides that county and area Technical Action Panels should be established in every county and area where agriculture makes a significant contribution to the economy.

Whether or not an RAD Committee has yet been formed, these Panels should coordinate their services to farm families and discuss how a consolidated approach to economic development can be of assistance.

3. Bulletin No. 1101 also provides for Technical Action Panel responsibility in organizing, strengthening and improving RAD Committee activities. For example, if there are no RAD Committees or if present RAD Committees are not representative of all groups and are not functioning to the extent that OEDP's and projects are being developed, then you and the other members of the executive committee of the TPA (FHA, SCS and ASCS) should meet with the appropriate representatives of the Committee and the Extension Agent to see that these committees are properly functioning, and see that committees are broadly representative of the interests of the people in the county, area or State. To assist in broadening Committees - you should see that former FHA County Committeemen, SCS District Supervisors, ASCS County and Precinct Committeemen, REA Boards of Directors, representatives of Farmer Cooperatives, farm organization leaders and others that have interest and concern in the development of the community are invited to be members of the RAD Committee.

#### DEVELOPING PROJECTS - OR WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE:

There are about four types of situations that exist today.



1. Where OEDP's have been properly prepared by a representative group, we recommend the following course of action:

In this situation the Technical Action Panel should review OEDP's, identify projects, programs and practices that are feasible of accomplishment and decide upon proper course of action for implementation. Then meet with the Committee, perhaps with the executive committee of the RAD Committee, and offer a plan of action.

2. The second type of case is one in which the OEDP was developed without involving the local people.

Here the Panel would study the OEDP, make recommendations for improving and implementing it and meet with the RAD executive committee to offer assistance in improving the OEDP and implementing projects in the same manner as in the first situation.

3. The third type of situation is one where an OEDP has not been developed. It is the responsibility of the Panel to furnish information to the RAD Committee in order that the resources of the area are analyzed, the opportunities for development are recognized and are included in the OEDP.

Here again we are to serve as resource people, to furnish information and recommend courses of action to the Committee in order that the local RAD Committee and its action sub-committees might decide which of the courses of action to follow for economic development.



4. The fourth situation is where an active organization is now in existence and is not an RAD organization and perhaps is located in a 5(a) labor market area. In these instances the Technical Action Panel should review the OEDP, if one exists, or the resources of the area if there is not one in existence and submit to the appropriate committee or subcommittee of the development agency our recommendations for the development of the area economy in relationship to the agricultural and forestry resources. Our experience has shown that development committees that have little or limited knowledge of agriculture and forestry will welcome such assistance.

#### SOME EXAMPLES OF RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION:

Rural Areas Development has varied throughout the Nation. To some people it is moving an industrial plant into a rural community. To others it is simply carrying out the usual programs of the Department's agencies. If this is the case, then Rural Areas Development will be a failure. However, rural development varies widely from county-to-county and from State-to-State. Some types of projects that have been successful will be handed out to you in order that you might see what some of the other communities are doing.

#### OBSERVATIONS OF OEDP'S:

Rural planning is not new. Many of the OEDP's for the year have been very incomplete. However, there seems to be a daily increase of both quantity and quality in OEDP's submitted.

We have listed on the sheet which we will hand out to you some of the general observations that we have made regarding the deficiencies in these OEDP's. Certainly all deficiencies do not apply to any one OEDP, any one State, or any one area.



### COMPREHENSIVE OEDP'S:

Several people have asked the question, "What does a comprehensive OEDP look like?" The essential differences between the provisional OEDP and the comprehensive OEDP is a matter of completeness and analytical thoroughness.

Many provisional OEDP's will require very little effort in re-examination and up-dating in order to be made into a comprehensive OEDP. However, in no instances will OEDP's prepared for large areas (two or more counties) be acceptable. Normally OEDP's will be prepared on a county basis. However, it may be a combination of two or more counties, depending on the people's interest and their willingness to work together. Generally a development area will represent a community of interest which the people themselves recognize.

Many provisional OEDP's for ARA counties will soon expire. We understand from the Area Redevelopment Administration that upon request, these expiration dates may be extended for a short period providing progress is being made on development of the comprehensive OEDP.

The Department of Agriculture will within the next six weeks issue a suggested outline for preparing OEDP's in all counties. This is to be used in counties not designated for ARA assistance. It will also be appropriate for use in ARA designated counties as it will not conflict with present ARA guides but rather complement or supplement them. This USDA guide will also provide for State supplements as needed to adapt it to State conditions.

### GOALS FOR RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT:

Our goal for this fiscal year is an OEDP for every rural county in America where there is a need for economic development of rural areas. Why this goal?

1. It is time to get started on an economic development plan for each county that does not already have this work underway.



2. An OEDP will serve as the focal point to bring the resources of USDA to bear on the economy of the county or area.
3. An OEDP gives the RAD Committees and Technical Action Panels something tangible and concrete to work on. A real basis for needed coordination and cooperation.

RURAL RENEWAL - Section 102 of the Farm Bill provides:

1. Aid to local people to develop their land and other resources.

Two principal types of assistance under this section:

1. Technical assistance to local rural renewal authority for organization and planning.
2. Financial assistance to local public bodies to carry out renewal activities.

Rural renewal is concerned with better land use for agriculture, conservation, outdoor recreation and related purposes, or rebuilding a chronically depressed rural area. Financial assistance would be used for:

1. Redevelopment purposes such as forestry; soil and water conservation; flood prevention; drainage and reorganization of farm land resources; removal of or relocation of buildings; installation of such facilities as access roads, parks, water supply systems, sewage disposal; and outdoor recreation such as boating, hunting and fishing.

All technical assistance would be furnished in the formulation and implementation of the locally approved development plan. Such plans would offer the local organization a concentration, intensification and acceleration of the present USDA programs available to the area.



Loan funds authorized by the Act would be used to fill gaps that exist in present credit sources for such development costs.

Local sponsors of rural renewal projects must have a willingness, as well as legal capacity, to carry out renewal activities.

Legislation provides for a few pilot projects.

A rural renewal project might be described as an RAD program on an intensified basis in a prescribed area or community.

In conclusion - RAD is not the State Directors' job alone. It is not the RAD man's job alone. The State staff members have responsibility - the Area Supervisor has got to become more closely identified with and a part of RAD. This aspect has not been stressed enough. RAD is the job of all of us working for the good of rural people in rural America. For the Nation as a whole this includes the 30 percent of our population that live on 99 percent of the land area of our country.

